

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 13130 121222Z

47

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INFO USMISSION NATO

DIA

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMCONSUL TRIESTE

AMCONSUL TURIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13130

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY DEMARTINO

SUMMARY: DURING A PRIVATE LUNCHEON WITH THE AMBASSADOR, SOCIAL-IST SECRETARY DEMARTINO CONFIRMED THAT HIS PARTY WILL NOT IN THE NEAR FUTURE FORCE APARLIAMENTARY OR POLITICAL SHOWDOWN WHICH COULD BRING DOWN THE MORO GOVERNMENT. HE INSISTED HOWEVER THAT THE PSI COULD NOT WAIT FOREVER FOR THE DC "TO RENEW ITSELF" AND REACH A SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT WITH THE SOCIALISTS. HE CONSIDERS IT ESSENTIAL THAT THE COMMUNISTS BE "OBLIGATED" IN SOME WAY IN THE GOVERNMENT, WITHOUT ENTERING IT. OTHERWISE THE SOCIALISTS COULD NOT AFFORD TO REMAIN TIED TO THE DC AND LEAVE TO THE COMMUNISTS THE "ADVANTAGE OF OPPOSITION", WHICH HE SAID EXPLAIN THE RESULTS OF THE JUNE 15 ELECTION. THOUGH HE DEFINED NO SPECIFIC LIMIT TO THE PSI PATIENCE, THE IMMEDIATE DEADLINE IS PROBABLY THE PSI CONGRESS NOW SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER. DEMARTINO SEEMED PLEASE AT AMBASSADOR'S CONFIRMATION THAT US POLICY TOWARD THE PCI HAD NOT CHANGED. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE LUNCHEON
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 13130 121222Z

INDICATE THAT DEMARTINO PRIVATELY SHARES THE CONCERN OF MANY

IN HIS PARTY THAT THE PCI MIGHT REPLACE THE PSI AS THE INTER-LOCUTOR OF THE ITALIAN LEFT WITH THE US. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A TETE-A-TETE LUNCHEON WITH ME AT RESIDENCE SOCIALIST SECRETARY DEMARTINO GAVE ME HIS VIEWS CONCERNING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION. THE SOCIALISTS (PSI) HE SAID DO NOT WANT A GOVERNMENT CRISIS, WHICH WOULD BE MADNESS IN THE PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION. IN VIEW OF THE LATTER, IT IS NECESSARY FOR PARLIAMENT TO APPROVE QUICKLY THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-RECESSION DECREES, AND THEN CONFRONT THE LABOR NEGOTIATIONS. THE LEFT AND LABOR'S LEADERSHIP ARE PREPARED TO SHOW THE NECESSARY RESTRAINT; BUT, UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT MOVES QUICKLY TO REACQUIRE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE THROUGH ACTION ON SOCIAL NEEDS AND UNEMPLOYMENT, HE WAS NOT SURE LABOR'S LEADERSHIP COULD KEEP THE RANK-AND-FILE IN LINE. HE CONSIDERS IT REMARKABLE THAT THERE HAS NOT YET BEEN "REVOLUTION" IN NAPLES WITH ITS 130,000 UNEMPLOYED.

2. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THE SOCIALISTS ARE MAINTAINING A STANCE OF PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC), BUT CANNOT AFFORD TO WAIT FOREVER. THE SOCIALISTS PAID A HIGH PRICE FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE CENTER-LEFT. MODEST AS THEIR GAINS WERE ON JUNE 15, THEY WERE ACHIEVED ONLY BECAUSE THEY HAD TAKEN THEIR DISTANCE FROM THE DC. THE PCI'S LARGE GAIN AS THE PARTY OF OPPOSITION SOUND-ED THE ALARM. OBSERVERS MUST REMEMBER, DEMARTINO SAID, THAT THE PSI IS SOCIALIST AND MUST MOVE WITH ITS ELECTORATE. "NO ONE" IN THE PSI RANK-AND-FILE WANTS TO HAVE ANYTHING MORE TO DO WITH THE DC. THE PSI CAN RETURN TO GOVERNMENT ONLY IF THE DC TRULY RENEWS ITSELF, AND ONLY IF THE ADVANTAGES OF OPPOSITION ARE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE COMMUNISTS.

3. REGARDING THE DC, DEMARTINO WAS QUITE PESSIMISTIC. HE SEES LITTLE PROGRESS SO FAR IN ITS RENEWAL AND EXPECTS THE PROCESS TO BE A LONG ONE. THE DC IS IN FULL FERMENT, WITH OLD ALLIANCES DISSOLVING AND NEW ONES NOT YET FORMED. HE DOUBTED WHETHER THE DC WOULD BE READY TO HOLD A CONGRESS EVEN AS LATE AS NEXT SPRING; AND, WHILE RESPECTING ZACCAGNINI AS A PERSON, HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO LEAD.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 13130 121222Z

4. REGARDING THE PCI, DEMARTINO SAID IT MUST BE "OBLIGATED" IN SOME WAY TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT ACTUALLY BRINGING IT INTO GOVERNMENT. IN THE PAST, THE PCI HAS ALWAYS ENCOURAGED THE PSI TO LEAD THE FIGHT IN GOVERNMENT FOR SOCIAL CAUSES, WHILE HARVESTING POPULAR DISCONTENT AS PARTY OF OPPOSITION. THE PCI COULD NOT AFFORD TO LET THIS GO ON MUCH LONGER. DEMARTINO RECOGNIZES THE PCI'S TIES TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM AS THE GREATEST OBJECTION TO GIVING IT FULL CONFIDENCE, BUT INSISTED

ONE CANNOT IGNORE ITS POSITION AS THE LEGIMATE SPOKESMAN FOR THE SOCIAL NEEDS OF A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT MUCH OF THE PCI VOTE IS A PROTEST VOTE AND COULD BE WON BACK. SHOULD THE PCI BEGIN TO ACT LIKE THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS, HE SAID, THE PSI WILL BEGIN TO ACT LIKE SOARES.

5. DURING THE CONVERSATION, I INDICATED MY CONCERN OVER THE PSI'S GROWING COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS. HE APPARENTLY EXPECTED TO BE TASKED ON THIS SUBJECT AND REPEATED THE VIEWS SUMMARIZED ABOVE IN SEVERAL VARIANTS IN THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION. I ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI HAD NOT CHANGED, DESPITE SPECULATION IN THE PRESS AND REFERRED HIM TO THE INTERVIEW I HAD JUST GIVEN TO THAT NATIONAL WEEKLY EPOCA. HE DID NOT COMMENT BUT SEEMED PLEASED TO HAVE THE CONFIRMATION.

6 ON OTHER MATTERS, DEMARTINO SHOWED RESPECT FOR THE REPUBLICANS (PRI) BUT DID NOT THINK ITS POPULAR APPEAL WOULD EVER GO BEYOND ITS PRESENT MODEST LEVEL (THE ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF A PARTY IS BASED ON ITS INFRASTRUCTURE); SAW THE PSDI AS HAVING LOST RELEVANCE WITH MANY MOVING TOWARD THE SOCIALISTS; AND PREFERS THAT THE PSI ENTER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE TYPE FORMED IN THE REGION OF LOMBARDY (CENTER-LEFT WITH COMMUNIST SUPPORT), RATHER THAN ONE LIKE THAT FORMED IN MILAN (PCI-PSI WITH DC AND PSDI DEFECTORS).

7. COMMENT: DEMARTINO'S READY ACCEPTANCE OF MY INVITATION AND HIS FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE THROUGHOUT OUR CONVERSATION CONFIRM THAT HE SHARES THE CONCERN OF THOSE IN HIS PARTY WHO FEAR THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL REPLACE THEM AS INTERLOCUTORS OF THE ITALIAN LEFT WITH THE US. THOUGH HE AVOIDED ESTIMATING HOW LONG THE PSI "CAN WAIT" FOR THE DC TO SATISFY ITS DEMANDS, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ROME 13130 121222Z

IT IS CLEAR THAT THE IMMEDIATE DEADLINE, BARRING UNFORESEEN EVENTS, IS THE PARTY'S SCHEDULED CONGRESS IN DECEMBER. VOLPE

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